

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

EFFIE VISSER

Plaintiff,

v.

LOWE'S HOME CENTERS, LLC, and  
DOES 1 TO 100,

Defendants.

Case No.: 1:22-cv-01110-JLT-EPG

ORDER APPROVING STIPULATED  
PROTECTIVE ORDER

(ECF No. 12.)

The Court having read the parties' Joint Motion for the Entry of a Protective Order, and good cause appearing, the Court hereby enters the following protective order:

1. A. PURPOSES AND LIMITATIONS

Disclosure and discovery activity in this action are likely to involve production of confidential, proprietary, or private information for which special protection from public disclosure and from use for any purpose other than prosecuting this litigation may be warranted. Accordingly, the parties hereby stipulate to and petition the court to enter the following Stipulated Protective Order. The parties acknowledge that this Order does not confer blanket protections on all disclosures or responses to discovery and that the protection it affords from public disclosure and use extends only to the limited information or items that are entitled to confidential treatment under the applicable legal principles.

B. GOOD CAUSE STATEMENT

1 Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 26(c)(1) states in pertinent part, that the Court, upon  
2 a showing of good cause may “issue an order to protect a party from annoyance, embarrassment,  
3 oppression, or undue burden or expense.” Fed.R.Civ.P. 26(c)(1). In the instant matter, Defendant  
4 Lowe’s Home Centers, LLC’s Confidential Documents contain proprietary and confidential trade  
5 secret information relating to Defendant Lowe’s Home Centers, LLC’s business practices and its  
6 safety protocol. Defendant Lowe’s Home Centers, LLC. (“Defendant” or “Lowe’s”) derives  
7 independent economic value from maintaining the confidentiality of the policies and procedures set  
8 forth in these Confidential Documents.

9 Defendant is a retailer in the home improvement industry and has conducted business in  
10 California since 1998. The home improvement retail industry is very competitive. As a result of  
11 years of investing time and money in research and investigation, Defendant developed the policies  
12 contained in the Confidential Documents for the purposes of maintaining the security and  
13 accessibility of its merchandise, providing quality customer service, and ensuring the safety of its  
14 employees and customers. These policies and procedures, as memorialized in the Confidential  
15 Documents, were created and generated by Lowe’s for Lowe’s, and are used for the purposes of  
16 maintaining safety at its stores and creating efficient and organized work environments for its  
17 employees. As a result, Defendant is able to minimize the waste of any resources, which is a key  
18 factor in generating profitability for its business.

19 Defendant derives economic value from maintaining the secrecy of its Confidential  
20 Documents. If disclosed to the public, the trade secret information contained in Defendant’s  
21 Confidential Documents would reveal Defendant’s internal operations and could potentially be used  
22 by competitors as a means to compete for its customers, interfere with its business plans and thereby  
23 gain unfair business advantages. If Defendant’s safety protocol were revealed to the general public,  
24 it would hinder Defendant’s ability to effectively resolve and minimize liability claims, and its goal  
25 of protecting its customers and employees from theft and other crimes. Unrestricted or unprotected  
26 disclosure of such information would result in prejudice or harm to Defendant by revealing Lowe’s  
27 competitive confidential information, which has been developed at the expense of Lowe’s and which  
28 represents valuable tangible and intangible assets. Accordingly, the parties respectfully submit that

1 there is good cause for the entry of this Protective Order.

2 2. DEFINITIONS

3 2.1 Challenging Party: a Party or Non-Party that challenges the designation of  
4 information or items under this Order.

5 2.2 "CONFIDENTIAL" Information or Items: information (regardless of how it is  
6 generated, stored or maintained) or tangible things that qualify for protection under Federal Rule of  
7 Civil Procedure 26(c).

8 2.3 Counsel (without qualifier): Outside Counsel of Record and House Counsel (as well  
9 as their support staff).

10 2.4 Designating Party: a Party or Non-Party that designates information or items that it  
11 produces in disclosures or in responses to discovery as "CONFIDENTIAL."

12 2.5 Disclosure or Discovery Material: all items or information, regardless of the medium  
13 or manner in which it is generated, stored, or maintained (including, among other things, testimony,  
14 transcripts, and tangible things), that are produced or generated in disclosures or responses to  
15 discovery in this matter.

16 2.6 Expert: a person with specialized knowledge or experience in a matter pertinent to  
17 the litigation who has been retained by a Party or its counsel to serve as an expert witness or as a  
18 consultant in this action.

19 2.7 House Counsel: attorneys who are employees of a party to this action. House Counsel  
20 does not include Outside Counsel of Record or any other outside counsel.

21 2.8 Non-Party: any natural person, partnership, corporation, association, or other legal  
22 entity not named as a Party to this action.

23 2.9 Outside Counsel of Record: attorneys who are not employees of a party to this action  
24 but are retained to represent or advise a party to this action and have appeared in this action on behalf  
25 of that party or are affiliated with a law firm which has appeared on behalf of that party.

26 2.10 Party: any party to this action, including all of its officers, directors, employees,  
27 consultants, retained experts, and Outside Counsel of Record (and their support staffs).

28 2.11 Producing Party: a Party or Non-Party that produces Disclosure or Discovery

Material in this action.

2.12 Professional Vendors: persons or entities that provide litigation support services (e.g., photocopying, videotaping, translating, preparing exhibits or demonstrations, and organizing, storing, or retrieving data in any form or medium) and their employees and subcontractors.

2.13 Protected Material: any Disclosure or Discovery Material that is designated as “CONFIDENTIAL.”

2.14 Receiving Party: a Party that receives Disclosure or Discovery Material from a Producing Party.

### 3. SCOPE

The protections conferred by this Stipulation and Order cover not only Protected Material (as defined above), but also (1) any information copied or extracted from Protected Material; (2) all copies, excerpts, summaries, or compilations of Protected Material; and (3) any testimony, conversations, or presentations by Parties or their Counsel that might reveal Protected Material. However, the protections conferred by this Stipulation and Order do not cover the following information: (a) any information that is in the public domain at the time of disclosure to a Receiving Party or becomes part of the public domain after its disclosure to a Receiving Party as a result of publication not involving a violation of this Order, including becoming part of the public record through trial or otherwise; and (b) any information known to the Receiving Party prior to the disclosure or obtained by the Receiving Party after the disclosure from a source who obtained the information lawfully and under no obligation of confidentiality to the Designating Party. Any use of Protected Material at trial shall be governed by a separate agreement or order.

### 4. DURATION

Even after final disposition of this litigation, the confidentiality obligations imposed by this Order shall remain in effect until a Designating Party agrees otherwise in writing or a court order otherwise directs. Final disposition shall be deemed to be the later of (1) dismissal of all claims and defenses in this action, with or without prejudice; and (2) final judgment herein after the completion and exhaustion of all appeals, rehearings, remands, trials, or reviews of this action, including the time limits for filing any motions or applications for extension of time pursuant to applicable law.

5. DESIGNATING PROTECTED MATERIAL

5.1 Exercise of Restraint and Care in Designating Material for Protection. Each Party or Non-Party that designates information or items for protection under this Order must take care to limit any such designation to specific material that qualifies under the appropriate standards. The Designating Party must designate for protection only those parts of material, documents, items, or oral or written communications that qualify – so that other portions of the material, documents, items, or communications for which protection is not warranted are not swept unjustifiably within the ambit of this Order.

Mass, indiscriminate, or routinized designations are prohibited. Designations that are shown to be clearly unjustified or that have been made for an improper purpose (e.g., to unnecessarily encumber or retard the case development process or to impose unnecessary expenses and burdens on other parties) expose the Designating Party to sanctions.

If it comes to a Designating Party's attention that information or items that it designated for protection do not qualify for protection, that Designating Party must promptly notify all other Parties that it is withdrawing the mistaken designation.

5.2 Manner and Timing of Designations. Except as otherwise provided in this Order (see, e.g., second paragraph of section 5.2(a) below), or as otherwise stipulated or ordered, Disclosure or Discovery Material that qualifies for protection under this Order must be clearly so designated before the material is disclosed or produced.

Designation in conformity with this Order requires:

(a) for information in documentary form (e.g., paper or electronic documents, but excluding transcripts of depositions or other pretrial or trial proceedings), that the Producing Party affix the legend "CONFIDENTIAL" to each page that contains protected material. If only a portion or portions of the material on a page qualifies for protection, the Producing Party also must clearly identify the protected portion(s) (e.g., by making appropriate markings in the margins).

A Party or Non-Party that makes original documents or materials available for inspection need not designate them for protection until after the inspecting Party has indicated which material it would like copied and produced. During the inspection and before the designation, all of the

1 material made available for inspection shall be deemed “CONFIDENTIAL.” After the inspecting  
2 Party has identified the documents it wants copied and produced, the Producing Party must  
3 determine which documents, or portions thereof, qualify for protection under this Order. Then,  
4 before producing the specified documents, the Producing Party must affix the “CONFIDENTIAL”  
5 legend to each page that contains Protected Material. If only a portion or portions of the material on  
6 a page qualifies for protection, the Producing Party also must clearly identify the protected portion(s)  
7 (e.g., by making appropriate markings in the margins).

8 (b) for testimony given in deposition or in other pretrial or trial proceedings, that the  
9 Designating Party identify on the record, before the close of the deposition, hearing, or other  
10 proceeding, all protected testimony.

11 (c) for information produced in some form other than documentary and for any other tangible  
12 items, that the Producing Party affix in a prominent place on the exterior of the container or  
13 containers in which the information or item is stored the legend “CONFIDENTIAL.” If only a  
14 portion or portions of the information or item warrant protection, the Producing Party, to the extent  
15 practicable, shall identify the protected portion(s).

16 5.3 Inadvertent Failures to Designate. If timely corrected, an inadvertent failure to  
17 designate qualified information or items does not, standing alone, waive the Designating Party’s  
18 right to secure protection under this Order for such material. Upon timely correction of a designation,  
19 the Receiving Party must make reasonable efforts to assure that the material is treated in accordance  
20 with the provisions of this Order.

21 6. CHALLENGING CONFIDENTIALITY DESIGNATIONS

22 6.1 Timing of Challenges. Any Party or Non-Party may challenge a designation of  
23 confidentiality at any time. Unless a prompt challenge to a Designating Party’s confidentiality  
24 designation is necessary to avoid foreseeable, substantial unfairness, unnecessary economic burdens,  
25 or a significant disruption or delay of the litigation, a Party does not waive its right to challenge a  
26 confidentiality designation by electing not to mount a challenge promptly after the original  
27 designation is disclosed.

28 6.2 Meet and Confer. The Challenging Party shall initiate the dispute resolution process

1 by providing written notice of each designation it is challenging and describing the basis for each  
2 challenge. To avoid ambiguity as to whether a challenge has been made, the written notice must  
3 recite that the challenge to confidentiality is being made in accordance with this specific paragraph  
4 of the Protective Order. The parties shall attempt to resolve each challenge in good faith and must  
5 begin the process by conferring directly (in voice to voice dialogue; other forms of communication  
6 are not sufficient) within 14 days of the date of service of notice. In conferring, the Challenging  
7 Party must explain the basis for its belief that the confidentiality designation was not proper and  
8 must give the Designating Party an opportunity to review the designated material, to reconsider the  
9 circumstances, and, if no change in designation is offered, to explain the basis for the chosen  
10 designation. A Challenging Party may proceed to the next stage of the challenge process only if it  
11 has engaged in this meet and confer process first or establishes that the Designating Party is  
12 unwilling to participate in the meet and confer process in a timely manner.

13         6.3     Judicial Intervention. If the Parties cannot resolve a challenge without court  
14 intervention, the Designating Party shall file and serve a motion to retain confidentiality under Civil  
15 Local Rule 7 (and in compliance with Civil Local Rule 79-5, if applicable) within 21 days of the  
16 initial notice of challenge or within 14 days of the parties agreeing that the meet and confer process  
17 will not resolve their dispute, whichever is earlier. Each such motion must be accompanied by a  
18 competent declaration affirming that the movant has complied with the meet and confer  
19 requirements imposed in the preceding paragraph. Failure by the Designating Party to make such a  
20 motion including the required declaration within 21 days (or 14 days, if applicable) shall  
21 automatically waive the confidentiality designation for each challenged designation. In addition, the  
22 Challenging Party may file a motion challenging a confidentiality designation at any time if there is  
23 good cause for doing so, including a challenge to the designation of a deposition transcript or any  
24 portions thereof. Any motion brought pursuant to this provision must be accompanied by a  
25 competent declaration affirming that the movant has complied with the meet and confer  
26 requirements imposed by the preceding paragraph.

27         The burden of persuasion in any such challenge proceeding shall be on the Designating Party.  
28 Frivolous challenges, and those made for an improper purpose (e.g., to harass or impose unnecessary

1 expenses and burdens on other parties) may expose the Challenging Party to sanctions. Unless the  
2 Designating Party has waived the confidentiality designation by failing to file a motion to retain  
3 confidentiality as described above, all parties shall continue to afford the material in question the  
4 level of protection to which it is entitled under the Producing Party's designation until the court rules  
5 on the challenge.

6 7. ACCESS TO AND USE OF PROTECTED MATERIAL

7 7.1 Basic Principles. A Receiving Party may use Protected Material that is disclosed or  
8 produced by another Party or by a Non-Party in connection with this case only for prosecuting,  
9 defending, or attempting to settle this litigation. Such Protected Material may be disclosed only to  
10 the categories of persons and under the conditions described in this Order. When the litigation has  
11 been terminated, a Receiving Party must comply with the provisions of section 13 below (FINAL  
12 DISPOSITION).

13 Protected Material must be stored and maintained by a Receiving Party at a location and in  
14 a secure manner that ensures that access is limited to the persons authorized under this Order.

15 7.2 Disclosure of "CONFIDENTIAL" Information or Items. Unless otherwise ordered  
16 by the court or permitted in writing by the Designating Party, a Receiving Party may disclose any  
17 information or item designated "CONFIDENTIAL" only to:

18 (a) the Receiving Party's Outside Counsel of Record in this action, as well as employees of  
19 said Outside Counsel of Record to whom it is reasonably necessary to disclose the information for  
20 this litigation and who have signed the "Acknowledgment and Agreement to Be Bound" that is  
21 attached hereto as Exhibit A;

22 (b) the officers, directors, and employees (including House Counsel) of the Receiving Party  
23 to whom disclosure is reasonably necessary for this litigation and who have signed the  
24 "Acknowledgment and Agreement to Be Bound" (Exhibit A);

25 (c) Experts (as defined in this Order) of the Receiving Party to whom disclosure is  
26 reasonably necessary for this litigation and who have signed the "Acknowledgment and Agreement  
27 to Be Bound" (Exhibit A);

28 (d) the court and its personnel;

(e) court reporters and their staff, professional jury or trial consultants, mock jurors, and Professional Vendors to whom disclosure is reasonably necessary for this litigation and who have signed the “Acknowledgment and Agreement to Be Bound” (Exhibit A);

(f) during their depositions, witnesses in the action to whom disclosure is reasonably necessary and who have signed the “Acknowledgment and Agreement to Be Bound” (Exhibit A), unless otherwise agreed by the Designating Party or ordered by the court. Pages of transcribed deposition testimony or exhibits to depositions that reveal Protected Material must be separately bound by the court reporter and may not be disclosed to anyone except as permitted under this Stipulated Protective Order.

(g) the author or recipient of a document containing the information or a custodian or other person who otherwise possessed or knew the information.

(h) any mediator or settlement officer, and their supporting personnel, mutually agreed upon by any of the parties engaged in settlement discussions.

8. PROTECTED MATERIAL SUBPOENAED OR ORDERED PRODUCED IN OTHER LITIGATION

If a Party is served with a subpoena or a court order issued in other litigation that compels disclosure of any information or items designated in this action as “CONFIDENTIAL,” that Party must:

(a) promptly notify in writing the Designating Party. Such notification shall include a copy of the subpoena or court order;

(b) promptly notify in writing the party who caused the subpoena or order to issue in the other litigation that some or all of the material covered by the subpoena or order is subject to this Protective Order. Such notification shall include a copy of this Stipulated Protective Order; and

(c) cooperate with respect to all reasonable procedures sought to be pursued by the Designating Party whose Protected Material may be affected.

If the Designating Party timely seeks a protective order, the Party served with the subpoena or court order shall not produce any information designated in this action as “CONFIDENTIAL” before a determination by the court from which the subpoena or order issued, unless the Party has

1 obtained the Designating Party's permission. The Designating Party shall bear the burden and  
2 expense of seeking protection in that court of its confidential material – and nothing in these  
3 provisions should be construed as authorizing or encouraging a Receiving Party in this action to  
4 disobey a lawful directive from another court.

5 9. A NON-PARTY'S PROTECTED MATERIAL SOUGHT TO BE PRODUCED IN THIS  
6 LITIGATION

7 (a) The terms of this Order are applicable to information produced by a Non-Party in this  
8 action and designated as "CONFIDENTIAL." Such information produced by Non-Parties in  
9 connection with this litigation is protected by the remedies and relief provided by this Order. Nothing  
10 in these provisions should be construed as prohibiting a Non-Party from seeking additional  
11 protections.

12 (b) In the event that a Party is required, by a valid discovery request, to produce a Non-  
13 Party's confidential information in its possession, and the Party is subject to an agreement with the  
14 Non-Party not to produce the Non-Party's confidential information, then the Party shall:

15 (1) promptly notify in writing the Requesting Party and the Non-Party that some or  
16 all of the information requested is subject to a confidentiality agreement with a Non-Party;

17 (2) promptly provide the Non-Party with a copy of the Stipulated Protective Order  
18 in this litigation, the relevant discovery request(s), and a reasonably specific description of  
19 the information requested; and

20 (3) make the information requested available for inspection by the Non-Party.

21 (c) If the Non-Party fails to object or seek a protective order from this court within 14 days of  
22 receiving the notice and accompanying information, the Receiving Party may produce the Non-  
23 Party's confidential information responsive to the discovery request. If the Non-Party timely seeks  
24 a protective order, the Receiving Party shall not produce any information in its possession or control  
25 that is subject to the confidentiality agreement with the Non-Party before a determination by the  
26 court. Absent a court order to the contrary, the Non-Party shall bear the burden and expense of  
27 seeking protection in this court of its Protected Material.

28 10. UNAUTHORIZED DISCLOSURE OF PROTECTED MATERIAL

1 If a Receiving Party learns that, by inadvertence or otherwise, it has disclosed Protected  
2 Material to any person or in any circumstance not authorized under this Stipulated Protective Order,  
3 the Receiving Party must immediately (a) notify in writing the Designating Party of the unauthorized  
4 disclosures, (b) use its best efforts to retrieve all unauthorized copies of the Protected Material, (c)  
5 inform the person or persons to whom unauthorized disclosures were made of all the terms of this  
6 Order, and (d) request such person or persons to execute the “Acknowledgment and Agreement to  
7 Be Bound” that is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

8 11. INADVERTENT PRODUCTION OF PRIVILEGED OR OTHERWISE PROTECTED  
9 MATERIAL

10 When a Producing Party gives notice to Receiving Parties that certain inadvertently produced  
11 material is subject to a claim of privilege or other protection, the obligations of the Receiving Parties  
12 are those set forth in Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 26(b)(5)(B). This provision is not intended to  
13 modify whatever procedure may be established in an e-discovery order that provides for production  
14 without prior privilege review. Pursuant to Federal Rule of Evidence 502(d) and (e), insofar as the  
15 parties reach an agreement on the effect of disclosure of a communication or information covered  
16 by the attorney-client privilege or work product protection, the parties may incorporate their  
17 agreement in the stipulated protective order submitted to the court.

18 12. MISCELLANEOUS

19 12.1 Right to Further Relief. Nothing in this Order abridges the right of any person to seek  
20 its modification by the court in the future.

21 12.2 Right to Assert Other Objections. By stipulating to the entry of this Protective Order  
22 no Party waives any right it otherwise would have to object to disclosing or producing any  
23 information or item on any ground not addressed in this Stipulated Protective Order. Similarly, no  
24 Party waives any right to object on any ground to use in evidence of any of the material covered by  
25 this Protective Order.

26 12.3 Filing Protected Material. Without written permission from the Designating Party or  
27 a court order secured after appropriate notice to all interested persons, a Party may not file in the  
28 public record in this action any Protected Material. A Party that seeks to file under seal any Protected

1 Material must comply with Civil Local Rule 141. Protected Material may only be filed under seal  
2 pursuant to a court order authorizing the sealing of the specific Protected Material at issue. Pursuant  
3 to Civil Local Rule 141, a sealing order will issue only upon a request establishing that the Protected  
4 Material at issue is privileged, protectable as a trade secret, or otherwise entitled to protection under  
5 the law. If a Receiving Party's request to file Protected Material under seal pursuant to Civil Local  
6 Rule 79-5(d) is denied by the court, then the Receiving Party may file the information in the public  
7 record pursuant to Civil Local Rule 79-5(e) unless otherwise instructed by the court.

8 13. FINAL DISPOSITION

9 Within 60 days after the final disposition of this action, as defined in paragraph 4, each  
10 Receiving Party must return all Protected Material to the Producing Party or destroy such material.  
11 As used in this subdivision, "all Protected Material" includes all copies, abstracts, compilations,  
12 summaries, and any other format reproducing or capturing any of the Protected Material. Whether  
13 the Protected Material is returned or destroyed, the Receiving Party must submit a written  
14 certification to the Producing Party (and, if not the same person or entity, to the Designating Party)  
15 by the 60 day deadline that (1) identifies (by category, where appropriate) all the Protected Material  
16 that was returned or destroyed and (2) affirms that the Receiving Party has not retained any copies,  
17 abstracts, compilations, summaries or any other format reproducing or capturing any of the Protected  
18 Material. Notwithstanding this provision, Counsel are entitled to retain an archival copy of all  
19 pleadings, motion papers, trial, deposition, and hearing transcripts, legal memoranda,  
20 correspondence, deposition and trial exhibits, expert reports, attorney work product, and consultant  
21 and expert work product, even if such materials contain Protected Material. Any such archival copies  
22 that contain or constitute Protected Material remain subject to this Protective Order as set forth in  
23 Section 4 (DURATION).

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EXHIBIT A

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT TO BE BOUND

I, \_\_\_\_\_ [print or type full name], of \_\_\_\_\_ [print or type full address], declare under penalty of perjury that I have read in its entirety and understand the Stipulated Protective Order that was issued by the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California on [date] in the case of *Effie Visser v. Lowe's Home Centers, LLC*, Case No.: 1:22-cv-01110-JLT-EPG. I agree to comply with and to be bound by all the terms of this Stipulated Protective Order and I understand and acknowledge that failure to so comply could expose me to sanctions and punishment in the nature of contempt. I solemnly promise that I will not disclose in any manner any information or item that is subject to this Stipulated Protective Order to any person or entity except in strict compliance with the provisions of this Order.

I further agree to submit to the jurisdiction of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California for the purpose of enforcing the terms of this Stipulated Protective Order, even if such enforcement proceedings occur after termination of this action.

I hereby appoint \_\_\_\_\_ [print or type full name] of \_\_\_\_\_ [print or type full address and telephone number] as my California agent for service of process in connection with this action or any proceedings related to enforcement of this Stipulated Protective Order.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

City and State where sworn and signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**ORDER**

Pursuant to the stipulation of the parties (ECF No. 12), and as set forth above, the parties' Stipulated Protective Order is hereby approved.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: **April 7, 2023**

/s/ Eric P. Groj  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE